



WESTERN MONTGOMERY COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

Bethesda-Chevy Chase-North Bethesda-Rockville-Potomac

April 1, 2011

Mr. Erwin Mack, Chair
Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee
8107 Chester Street
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Dear Mr. Mack:

This letter serves as a follow up to the joint meeting on January 6, 2011 between the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee ("PTSAC") and the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board ("WMCCAB"). It additionally reflects further input from the WMCCAB Public Safety Committee meeting on March 1, 2011.

From these meetings, the WMCCAB learned that global pedestrian safety issues are best addressed by the PTSAC while site-specific issues are best addressed by Montgomery County's Pedestrian Safety Traffic Coordinator, Jeff Dunckel. As such, we have solicited input from our constituent communities referencing site-specific issues. We are seeking input from the communities on both "new" site-specific pedestrian safety concerns as well as concerns with ongoing issues. Once received, they will be forwarded to Mr. Dunckel for disposition and resolution.

Both of the aforementioned meetings yielded consistent global themes which the WMCCAB believes need to be addressed by the PTSAC. Our Public Safety Committee meeting on March 1st, 2011 reinforced and refined many of the concerns outlined in our October 28, 2010 correspondence with County Executive Leggett. The themes that the WMCCAB believes need to be addressed include:

1. There is a lack of accountability in tracking of pedestrian safety concerns. The 311 systems shows great promise but thus far has failed to adequately address incidents because the tracking number terminates once the concerns are passed to departments. The incident number should "pass through" to the concerned department, even if that department ends up being a non-County agency such as the State Highway Administration. This aligns well with the County Executive's emphasis on "A Responsive and Accountable County Government." That would allow citizens to track the disposition of their incident from start to finish.



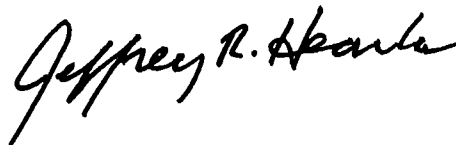
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2. The Montgomery County Government's web resources for pedestrian safety, found at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/walk>, are well organized, vibrant and direct citizens to appropriate resources. Similar to the first theme above, if a citizen uses these online resources, there is no way to track process or disposition. It refers directly, when appropriate, to the State Highway Administration. There would be no way for the county to track these "outsourced" incidents under the current design even though the issue is in Montgomery County.
3. There is a lack of coordination among agencies whose resources can impact pedestrian safety, even if the area responsibility for a particular road or sidewalk is well-defined. We heard about poor placement of telephone poles near or on sidewalks as well as fire hydrants impeding normal sidewalk flow. This has far reaching implications for those with physical impairments or mobility issues.
4. The County must harness the abilities of its highly capable citizens who are both passionate about pedestrian safety and are willing to engage. The citizens of Montgomery County who have attended our meetings have indicated that they want to participate in any pilot programs or pedestrian network evaluation studies and will mobilize to do so.
5. When pedestrian safety concerns are brought to the attention of county staff by our constituents, there is a perceived bias toward "getting to no," rather than on "getting to yes." Sometimes it appears that common sense does not prevail at times, and that standards can at times be our worst enemy. When appropriate, it would be helpful to work toward alternative solutions. In many instances, improved communication through compassion, detailed explanation, and plain language would go a long way toward improving the customer experience. Mr. Dunkel's outstanding efforts to proactively communicate with the community certainly have helped.

The WMCCAB is deeply committed to helping are stakeholders address their site-specific pedestrian safety concerns and hopes that this input helps the PTSAC develop an integrated, global approach to alleviating issues in Montgomery County. We will forward the site-specific list as mentioned above to you upon receiving additional input from the communities.

Regards,



Jeff Hearle, Chair, Western Montgomery County
Citizens Advisory Board

cc: The Honorable Isiah Leggett
The Honorable Valerie Ervin, Council President
The Honorable Roger Berliner, Chair, TE Committee